

## Southwest Asia: River Valley Simulation

### Introduction

With national events such as the devastation of Hurricane Katrina or the trauma of September 11<sup>th</sup> still current in both the public and therefore governmental eye, it is necessary for Federal, State, and Local governments to be able to practice strategies for future events. This lesson will integrate the decision-making processes similar to those modeled in “Measured Response”, a simulation developed at the Purdue Homeland Security Institute, with applicable social studies history standards. The advantage comes with the students participating in the higher order thinking processes, applied to an antiquated scenario.

### Standard Indicators

- 7.1.1 Explain the rise of early civilizations in the river valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia and along the Nile in Northeastern Africa, including Egypt and Kush.
- 7.1.18 Analyze cause-and-effect relationships, bearing in mind multiple causation, including the importance of individuals, ideas, human interests, beliefs, and chance in history.
- 7.1.20 Form and respond to historical questions, and use a variety of information resources to find and evaluate historical data on the people, places, events, and developments that have played a part in the history of Africa, Asia, and the Southwest Pacific.
- 7.1.21 Identify and evaluate solutions and alternative courses of action chosen by people to resolve problems confronting people in Africa, Asia, and the Southwest Pacific. Consider the information available, interests of those affected by the decision, and consequences of each course of action.

### Materials

*For the teacher:*

- Further information about Socratic seminar: [www.studyguide.org/socratic\\_seminar.htm](http://www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm)
- “Early Civilizations and River Valleys” available at: [www.indianastandardsresources.org/resources.asp?Subject=soc&Grade=7&Standard=1&Indicator=7.1.1&Resource=5885](http://www.indianastandardsresources.org/resources.asp?Subject=soc&Grade=7&Standard=1&Indicator=7.1.1&Resource=5885)

*For the students:*

- BLM 1 Invitation from your King
- BLM 2 Guidelines for Socratic Seminar Participants
- Access to the Internet and other sources
- BLM 3 Entrance/Exit Card

### Activity

#### A. Activation of Prior Knowledge

1. Student prior knowledge should be measured via “entrance card” on BLM 3. Optimally, the entrance and exit card should be copied back-to-back, to allow comparison of pre- and post-learning.
2. \*OPTIONAL: Begin the lesson by implementing the lesson from the Academic Resource Guide, “Early Civilizations and River Valleys”. This activity will create foundation prior knowledge that can be utilized later. If classroom space allows, the students should be organized into heterogeneous triads (or other multiples of three that will be later divided into triads) for this part of the activity.
3. Explain to the students that they are going to participate in a simulation, which is like a game. In this simulation they are going to be government advisors in ancient Mesopotamia. Use a wall map or refer the students to a textbook map. Tell the students that they live in a city between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and their king has come to them for help.

4. If they are not arranged already in triads, have them go to their groups now. Give each group BLM 1 *Invitation from your King*.
5. Read the *situation* to the class. Be certain to emphasize the dire need to their city and how their king is counting on them for advice.
6. Give the students a few minutes to complete the “What is your first thought?” and “What is your group’s first thought?” section of BLM 1.
  - Inform the students that each member of their group is going to be using a different resource. The students may either be assigned a resource, or they may decide as a group.

#### **B. Question Generation and Inquiry**

1. Explain to the class that each group will now begin gathering information about the problem. Though this is a problem that has plagued their city in the past, they are planning for the future and trying to predict how their solution may help the city. Before they can make a prediction, however, they must learn more about the problem. The group will now divide the learning responsibility, with the intention of reporting what was learned later.
2. If possible, arrange three learning centers where the advisors may move to and begin learning more about the problem. The advisors should bring paper and a writing utensil if they need to take any notes. The learning centers are:
  1. Textbook center: In this center students will read the relevant section of their textbook that discusses the geography of the river valleys in ancient Mesopotamia. The relevant sections should give a cursory explanation to the causes of the flooding and the flooding effects.
  2. Literature center: In this center students will read a portion of the [Epic of Gilgamesh](#) that discusses the flooding of the two rivers and how the ancient Mesopotamians viewed this event. A “student friendly” summary of the epic can be found at this website: [www.geocities.com/trpjwig/mideast/gilgamesh.html](http://www.geocities.com/trpjwig/mideast/gilgamesh.html)
  3. Technology (internet) center: In this center the students will use a selected internet website that addresses the Tigris-Euphrates river valley in the time of the ancient Mesopotamians. A website that may be helpful is available at: [www.mesopotamia.co.uk/trade/index.html](http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/trade/index.html) *Note: Due to the nature of the internet, it is important to preview and select a site in advance of student use rather than allowing students to “surf” and find information on their own.*
3. After researching the problem, the students will return to their. At their group, they should first complete their section of BLM 1, then discuss as a group what they learned.

#### **C. Socratic Seminar**

1. Following the completion of BLM 1 *Invitation from your King* explain to the students that they are now going to participate in a Socratic seminar. For this activity the students need to be able to see each other; sitting on the floor in a circle will do this. If the class has not participated in a seminar before, introduce the guidelines listed in BLM 2 *Guidelines for Socratic Seminar Participants*. Begin with the following prompt:
  - What might be the best plan of action the King can adopt?

Try to direct the students to converse together, rather than direction their answers, comments, or questions to you. The teacher should turn conversation away from themselves by redirecting it towards other students in the circle. A productive Socratic discussion will be self generating; these prompts may not be necessary if the students are focused on the discussion, and referring to the text to support their thinking. Prompts:

  - Based on what you have learned, how do you think the Mesopotamians viewed the flooding?
  - Base on what you have learned, what are some positive effects of the river flooding? Negative effects?
  - What do you think are possible negative or positive consequences (effects) of \_\_\_\_\_ (supply a group’s solution) plan of action? *Note: Use this prompt more than once after each new plan of action is shared with the class.*
  - What might be the best plan of action the King can adopt?

- *Why is it important for any government to think about problems before they occur? How might a government “practice” their solution without actually experiencing the problem?*
2. *Exit Card:* Student attendance and participation during the dialogue will be evaluated using the exit card on BLM 3.
  3. After returning to the classroom, explain to the students what the Mesopotamians real actions were in this situation. If time allows, have each group compare and contrast their plan of action with how the choices of ancient Mesopotamians living in the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley.

**D. Real-world Correlation**

1. Explain to the students that even the United States government plan for events that may not ever happen, and that it is often very important to see how a plan may work by practicing. In the past, practicing may have involved hundreds or thousands of people.
2. Discuss with the class the advantages and disadvantages of practicing with large numbers of people. Make a two column chart on the board, recording disadvantages in one column and advantages in the other.
3. Introduction to Measured Response: There are many ways to present this element of the lesson. The most efficient means would be to use an LCD projector and a connected PC with internet capability. Alternately, use of a computer lab may replace a class presentation, with students either grouped or viewing independently, as the computer lab may allow. View the [Measured Response 2004 Media File](http://center.e-enterprise.purdue.edu/wps/portal/.cmd/cs/.ce/155/.s/4906/_s.155/4906) available at:  
[center.e-enterprise.purdue.edu/wps/portal/.cmd/cs/.ce/155/.s/4906/\\_s.155/4906](http://center.e-enterprise.purdue.edu/wps/portal/.cmd/cs/.ce/155/.s/4906/_s.155/4906)

It is essential to preview the media file. As viewing it with the students, pause when appropriate to discuss the interactive nature of the simulation, as well as other qualities that students may be more familiar with. Afterward, reflect with the class over the advantages such a simulation would have in helping government plan for traumatic events.